

# NEWS AND NOTES FOR FLORIDA VETERANS

Veterans Service Center, VA Regional Office  
St. Petersburg, FL

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The "News and Notes for Florida Veterans" is published monthly by the Veterans Service Center, VA Regional Office, St. Petersburg, Florida, to provide information on VA benefit programs to veterans and dependents in Florida. The material presented does not have the effect of laws or regulations. Please send questions or comments on this newsletter to Veterans Service Center, ATTN: "News and Notes," PO Box 1437, St. Petersburg, FL 33731. We do not have the resources to maintain a mailing list for distribution to individuals; however this newsletter is available on the St. Petersburg VA Regional Office web site at [www.vba.va.gov/ro/south/spete](http://www.vba.va.gov/ro/south/spete).

**AN OPEN LETTER TO VETERANS FROM SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS ERIC K. SHINSEKI** (VA News Release) WASHINGTON – Following is an open letter to Veterans from Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki: "My name is Ric Shinseki, and I am a Veteran. For me, serving as Secretary of Veterans Affairs is a noble calling. It provides me the opportunity to give back to those who served with and for me during my 38 years in uniform and those on whose shoulders we all stood as we grew up in the profession of arms.

"The Department of Veterans Affairs has a solemn responsibility to all of you, today and in the future, as more Veterans join our ranks and enroll to secure the benefits and services they have earned. I am fully committed to fulfilling President Obama's vision for transforming our department so that it will be well-positioned to perform this duty even better during the 21st Century. We welcome the assistance and advice of our Veterans Service Organizations, other government departments and agencies, Congress, and all VA stakeholders as we move forward, ethically and transparently, so that Veterans and citizens can understand our efforts.

"Creating that vision for transforming the VA into a 21st Century organization requires a comprehensive review of our department. We approach that review understanding that Veterans are central to everything VA does. We know that results count, that the department will be measured by what we do, not what we promise, and that our best days as an organization supporting Veterans are ahead of us. We will fulfill President Lincoln's charge to care for "... him, who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan ..." by redesigning and reengineering ourselves for the future.

"Transforming any institution is supremely challenging; I know this from my own experience in leading large, proud, complex, and high-performing organizations through change. But the best organizations must be prepared to meet the challenging times, evolving technology and, most importantly, evolving needs of clients. Historically, organizations that are unwilling or unable to change soon

find themselves irrelevant. You and your needs are not irrelevant.

"Veterans are our clients, and delivering the highest quality care and services in a timely, consistent and fair manner is a VA responsibility. I take that responsibility seriously and have charged all of the department's employees for their best efforts and support every day to meet our obligations to you. Our path forward is challenging, but the President and Congress support us. They have asked us to do this well—for you. Veterans are our sole reason for existence and our number one priority—bar none. I look forward to working together with all VA employees to transform our department into an organization that reflects the change and commitment our country expects and our Veterans deserve.

"Thank you, and God bless our military, our Veterans, and our Nation." Signed: Eric K. Shinseki

## **STIMULUS BILL PROVIDES \$198 MILLION FOR FILIPINO VETERANS** (VA News Release)

WASHINGTON – A new benefit was announced for Filipino Veterans who aided American troops in World War II -- a cash payment authorized through the newly enacted American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Claims are now being accepted from Filipino Veterans eligible for one-time payments of \$9,000 for non-U.S. citizens and \$15,000 for Filipino Veterans with U.S. citizenship. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is working to begin making payments as soon as possible.

VA and the Embassy of the United States in Manila have announced locations in the Philippines where Veterans can apply immediately. The list has been posted at <http://manila.usembassy.gov>.

To receive information by mail, United States residents may call 1-800-827-1000. Philippine residents may call 632-528-2500 (within Metro Manila) or from outside Manila at 1-800-888-5252. In addition, Filipino Veterans may request information via email at <https://iris.va.gov>.

The VA Regional Office in Manila will process all claims for this benefit. Therefore, U.S. residents should mail the application to the Department of Veterans Affairs, Regional Office, PSC 501, FPO AP 96515-100.

Extensive outreach is planned to alert World War II Veterans throughout the Philippines. Claims must be submitted by Feb. 16, 2010, a year after the bill's signing.

The payments do not affect other benefits Veterans may be receiving. The VA regional office in Manila currently provides approximately \$15 million monthly in monetary benefits to Veterans residing in the Philippines. About \$8 million of this goes to Filipino World War II Veterans or their survivors each month.

**VETERANS IDENTIFICATION CARD** (Veterans Health Administration Fact Sheet) The Department of Veterans Affairs provides eligible veterans a Veterans Identification Card (VIC) for use at VA medical facilities. The VIC protects the privacy of veterans' sensitive information, as it no longer displays the Social Security Number or Date of Birth on the front of the card. The VIC will only display the veteran's name, picture, and special eligibility indicators – Service Connected, Purple Heart and Former POW, if applicable, on the front of the card. Only veterans who are eligible for VA medical benefits will receive the card.

**How VICs are issued:** Once the veteran has his or her picture taken for the VIC at the VA medical facility, the card will be mailed to the veteran within 7-10 days after the veteran's eligibility has been verified.

**What should veterans do if they do not receive the card in the 7-10 day timeframe?** The veteran should contact the local VA medical facility where the card was requested or call the Health Benefits Service Center at 1-877-222-VETS (8387).

**Purpose of the VIC:** The VIC is only for the purpose of identification and check-in for VA appointments. The VIC cannot be used as a credit card or an insurance card, and it does not authorize or pay for care at non-VA facilities. Veterans should safeguard their VIC similar to other identification cards that contain personal information.

**What to do if the card is lost or stolen:** Veterans should contact the VA medical facility where they took their picture to request a new card be re-issued.

**Replacement of old VICs:** Veterans with the old and outdated version of the VIC (which displays the Social Security Number and the Date of Birth), should replace the card with the new card. Veterans with the old card should report to their local VA medical facility to have a new card issued. Replacing the card will help protect veterans from potential identity theft.

**What to do with the old VIC?** The old VIC should be disposed of in a secure manner by cutting up or shredding the card.

## **VA FACILITIES ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS:**

### **SUICIDE PREVENTION 1-800-273-8255**

**VA Regional Office, St. Petersburg** - PO Box 1437, St. Petersburg, FL 33731 1-800-827-1000

**Regional Processing Office, Atlanta, GA** (education claims) - PO Box 100022, Decatur, GA 30031-7022 1-888-GIBILL1 (442-4551)

Telephone number for Chapter 30 self-verifications 1-877-823-2378

**VA EFT Information Hotline** (electronic funds transfer - direct deposit) 1-877-838-2778

**Veterans Health Administration Toll-Free Hotline** (medical care) - 1-877-222-8387

**VA Health Revenue Service** (information on amounts owed to VA Medical Centers) 1-866-793-4591

**VA Insurance Center, Philadelphia** (VA Insurance) - PO Box 42954, Philadelphia, PA 19101 1-800-669-8477

**VA Health Administration Center** (CHAMPVA and Spina Bifida health care) - CHAMPVA inquiries: PO Box 65023, Denver, CO 80206-5023

CHAMPVA claims: PO Box 65024, Denver, CO 80206-5024  
Spina Bifida inquiries and claims: PO Box 65025, Denver, CO 80206-5025 1-800-733-8387

### **National Cemeteries**

10,000 Bay Pines Blvd N, Bay Pines FL 727-398-9426  
6502 SW 102nd Ave, Bushnell FL 33513 352-793-7740  
6501 S State Rd 7, Lake Worth, FL 33467 561-649-6489  
4083 Lannie Rd, Jacksonville FL 32218 904-358-3510  
Naval Air Station, Pensacola FL 850-453-4108/4846  
9810 State Hwy 72, Sarasota FL 877-861-9840

**National Cemetery Administration Office of Memorial Programs** (headstones and markers) - 5109 Russell Rd Quantico VA 22134-3903 1-800-697-6947

**Loan Guaranty Eligibility Center** (certificates of eligibility) PO Box 20729, Winston-Salem, NC 27120 1-888-244-6711

**Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) Unit** - Chicago VA Regional Office 1-800-829-4833

### **INTERNET SITES OF INTEREST:**

**VA Web Site:** [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)

**VA Web Automated Reference Materials System (WARMS)** [www.warms.vba.va.gov](http://www.warms.vba.va.gov)

**St. Petersburg VA Regional Office:**

[www.vba.va.gov/ro/south/spete](http://www.vba.va.gov/ro/south/spete)

**Property Management (sale of VA-reposessed homes):** [www.ocwen.com](http://www.ocwen.com)

**Federal employment:** [www.usajobs.opm.gov](http://www.usajobs.opm.gov)

**Florida Dept of Veterans Affairs:** [www.floridavets.org](http://www.floridavets.org)

**"Florida Vets First:"** [www.FloridaVetsFirst.com](http://www.FloridaVetsFirst.com)

**Library of Congress (information on pending legislation)** [thomas.loc.gov](http://thomas.loc.gov)